

Amendment - Ser. No. 09/815,946

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REMARKS

Upon entry of this amendment, claims 1-3, 5, 6, 8, and 18 remain pending. Claims 1 and 6 are the only independent claims.

Restriction Requirement

The undersigned acknowledges the restriction requirement and the Examiner's withdrawal of claim 21 from consideration. Claim 21 has been canceled for presentation in a continuation/divisional application. It is not clear if an election is required given the Examiner's withdrawal of claim 21 from consideration and the cancellation of same. **To ensure a complete response to the Restriction Requirement, the applicant hereby elects to prosecute the invention of Group I, claims 1-3, 5, 6, 8, 11, 14, 15, and 18-20.**

The Helton Document

The Helton document does not disclose or fairly suggest the developments defined by amended independent claims 1 and 6 and the claims that depend respectively thereon. The Helton device requires that a plate be pivoted relative to a frame in order to connect a hook to the plate, by movement of the hook along the axis of the strap. When the hook is engaged with the plate, the plate is pivoted again so that the frame prevents disengagement of the hook from the plate. With Helton, the hook does not slide into an open space via an open end of the device. As such, Helton does not include or require any structure to prevent sliding escape of the hook from the open end. It is respectfully submitted that Independent claim 1 and dependent claims 2, 3, 5, and 18, and also independent claim 6 and dependent claim 8 define over Helton and meet all other statutory requirements. A Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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